

L . A . C O U N T Y F I R E

# ON THE LINE

WINTER 2006



## LACoFD Responds to Katrina

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New HQ Plan  
moves forward

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Fire Shelters  
get an upgrade

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## Reaching Out to Help Improve Lives: From Klinger to Katrina

At the beginning of each New Year, we declare personal resolutions designed to improve our lives in different areas. Our thoughts also turn to the victims of last year's hurricanes, who have a much greater challenge ahead this year than losing weight or getting more exercise, as they seek to rebuild what is left of their lives and homes.

As emergency responders, it is natural for us to also look back at the year in terms of disasters. Certainly, Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma will be remembered not only in our history books, but in our memories. Reaching out to these hurricane victims, our Swiftwater and Urban Search and Rescue teams proudly responded to the Gulf region for a period of several weeks. During their missions, they witnessed the devastating power of nature and the despair of local residents seeking a safe place after the storm. They also witnessed the powerful resiliency of the human spirit to rebuild their lives and homes, where possible. The stories and photographic memories of their deployment are shared in this issue of *On the Line*.

Another story in this issue is about our plans to build our new headquarters facility to replace the aged Klinger Center. Originally built in the early 1950s and re-dedicated in 1969 to the late Fire Chief Emeritus Keith Klinger, it is a special place. For those who have worked there, it's been "home" to our Department's executive managers and administrative personnel for over 50 years. Within its walls, many historic decisions have been made and it has served us well as our administrative hub.

Like a small home feels to a growing family, Klinger Center has become too small to house our entire administrative team. More importantly, cumulative foundation damage to the facility over the course of time have also affected its feasibility for long term use. More than two-thirds of our administrative personnel now work at two large satellite facilities in Commerce and elsewhere. As our organization has expanded to provide our services across the County and even into adjacent Orange County, it is time for a new headquarters facility that meets our needs.

The new facility will bring our administrative personnel "home" again to headquarters, where enhanced interaction and collaboration may take place. The footprint of the new facility will be located on the site of the Cecil R. Gehr Combat Training Center. Plans include ample space for all of our current administrative personnel, plus room for growth as our organization continues to broaden in services, scope and technological sophistication. Just like we plan for emergency scenarios, we also plan for our future needs so that our administrative teams will become more unified to respond to the public's need for our services.

It was gratifying for all of us to watch our emergency responders who provide our caring hometown service take that attentiveness with them as they helped the hurricane victims thousands of miles away. As we build our future and turn our thoughts to those who are rebuilding theirs, I thank you again for all of your hard work each day as you carry out our mission with distinction, professionalism and compassion for serving others.



**Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman**





# New Headquarters Facility Planned

The Construction and Maintenance Division Project Team is well underway in completing the initial planning stages for the Fire Department's new Headquarters Complex construction project. Projected to begin with an official groundbreaking ceremony as early as Summer 2006, the new facility is planned to open in December 2008. Working with architectural and engineering firm Gruen & Associates, the project management team has rendered the conceptual design of the new facility.

Estimated to cost \$40-\$45 million, the proposed 175,000 square foot Headquarters Complex will be comprised of two dual-story buildings connected by a three-story entry/office structure. A multi-level underground parking facility will accommodate approximately 500 vehicles. In addition to the improved structural design, there will be a new entrance road, an entrance plaza, a new firefighter memorial garden, a firefighter museum, a new wash and fueling station and a gymnasium. The projected facility will be situated slightly north of the current Fire Command & Control Facility at headquarters and will be sharing the same hill with the training tower. Upon completion of the new facility, Klinger Center is expected to be demolished.

The decision to build a new headquarters facility stems from two key concerns. First, it is due to the precarious condition of the current Klinger Center building. Located on the side of the hill, the structure continues to experience damage from gradual movements caused by an unstable foundation.

Considering the age of the building, repairs and modifications are neither conducive nor cost-effective. Secondly, the new facility will provide cost-cutting advantages by consolidating all administrative services to one centralized location. The Department will save approximately \$1.2 million spent annually in off-site leases of space in the Rickenbacker and Slauson facilities in the City of Commerce.

Although the projected completion date of December 2008 might seem a distance away, there is still more analysis and research to be done to ensure that the project remains on course, stays within budget and will be on schedule.



**The Capital Projects Team**

*Front Row (l-r): Erica Rolufs, Rocio Bailey, Tim Ottman, Fred Selayandia and Lisa Flores-Ondatje. Back Row (l-r): Arthur Scott, Kurt Duerfahrd, Ron Bleier, Ana Maria Lasoreto, Ross Pistone and Tom Brown.*



**Chief of Human Resources**  
**Carla Williams**

## H R C O R N E R

### Family Medical Leave Act – FMLA

What is Family Leave? Federal law gives eligible County employees the right to 12 weeks of unpaid leave each year for certain medical and family reasons, known as Family Leave (FL). Additionally, there are similar California pregnancy disability and family leave laws that may apply.

Who is eligible for Family Leave? To be eligible, employees must have worked for the County for at least one year and have performed at least 1,250 hours of work in the last 12 months.

**What are the medical and family reasons that allow employees to take Family Leave?** To care for the employee's newborn child, or placement of an adopted or foster child; to care for a spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition and for the employee's own serious health condition.

**How is Family Leave requested?** The employee completes a Request Form and Certification of Health Care Provider (available from Personnel) and sends it to the Personnel Services Section as soon as s/he knows of the need to take Family Leave. The employee is notified in writing of approval or denial by Personnel of the Family Leave request.

**How much notice must supervisors be given?** Generally, if the leave is foreseeable, 30 days notice is desirable.

**Must medical certification be provided even when Family Leave is to care for a child or spouse?** Yes. The health care provider must certify the serious health condition of the child or spouse, and the need for the employee to provide care.

**What happens to the employee's pay and health insurance during Family Leave?** Family Leave is unpaid, but employees can choose to use accrued benefit time such as vacation, overtime or personal sick time. They can also use sick time if the Family Leave is for their own illness. However, even if the Family Leave is unpaid, the County will continue to pay either the monthly County contribution or the health insurance premium (whichever is lower.)

**Can employees be rated as less than competent or disciplined for taking Family Leave?** No. Family Leave is a legally protected right of employees. Employers cannot deny Family Leave provided the employee qualifies, nor can they discriminate against employees for taking it.

For more information on Family Leave or any other Human Resources topic, please call us at (323) 881-2431. We welcome your calls and questions.

### Personal or Work Problems?

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is here to help all employees of the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

**(213) 738-4200**

Spanish and Mandarin speaking clinicians available.



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1320 N. Eastern Avenue,  
Los Angeles, CA 90063-3294.

#### Editor:

Kristina Hajjar  
(323) 881-6109  
[khajjar@lacofd.org](mailto:khajjar@lacofd.org)

#### Creative Director:

Christopher Thomas  
(323) 881-2435  
[cthomas@lacofd.org](mailto:cthomas@lacofd.org)

#### Photography:

John DeLeon  
(323) 881-2410  
[jdeleon@lacofd.org](mailto:jdeleon@lacofd.org)

A downloadable copy of this issue and back issues of *On the Line* are available online at [www.lacofd.org](http://www.lacofd.org).

#### Story ideas?

Please call Director of Communications  
Kristina Hajjar at (323) 881-6109 or via e-mail at [khajjar@lacofd.org](mailto:khajjar@lacofd.org).

#### OUR MISSION:

The mission of the Los Angeles County Fire Department is to protect lives, the environment, and property by providing prompt, skillful, and cost-effective fire protection and life safety services.

#### OUR VISION:

The Los Angeles County Fire Department will be an exemplary organization acclaimed for our national reputation, our regional strength, and our hometown attentiveness as we provide fire protection and life safety services.

#### OUR CORE VALUES:

Integrity, Teamwork,  
Caring, Courage, Commitment  
and Community



# Annual Firefighters Memorial Golf Tournament

## Nets \$25,000



*Southern California Gas Company employees Ron Caudle, Raj Patel, Roscoe King and Jim Fry pause for a pose next to some of the tee signs sponsored by supporting organizations.*

Over the past 15 years, the Los Angeles County Firefighters Memorial Committee has raised money through its annual Firefighters Memorial Golf Tournament. This year's tournament, with over 250 golfers playing on two championship courses, netted over \$25,000. All funds raised will go to the newly established Widows and Orphans Fund. This special fund will ensure that monies are immediately available to the families when a death occurs. The Firefighters Memorial Committee is dedicated to providing financial support for the families of those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Each year, Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman serves as the honorary chairman of the event.



*Information Management Division staff Karl Nobuyuki, Gary Nishimura and Dennis Casino join Division Chief Rob Sawyer for a low tech day.*



*Director of Human Resources Carla Williams, far right, joins (l-r) Mitchell Gillespie, Sheryl Kyllingstad and Yvonne Running at the post-tournament banquet.*



*Lisa Flores-Ondatje, Fred Selayandia and Paul Pelaski from the Construction and Maintenance Division enjoy their evening at the banquet.*

# THE GOLDEN ERA OF TRAINING



***Last fall's California Contract Cities Association Annual Dinner and business meeting was a step back in time to 1955, as city officials, Fire Department employees and their families were treated to "The Golden Days of Training," held at the Cecil R. Gehr Fire Combat Training Center at headquarters. The theme celebrated the Center's 50th anniversary, officially marked on November 14, 2005.***

One special guest in attendance was Scott Franklin, a "recruit" from the first class of 1955, who spent time recounting the challenges of making it through the Fire Academy. The celebration showcased several vintage apparatus, including a 1955 Crown fire engine, beautifully refurbished by Los Angeles County Fire Museum

Association members. Also known as "Engine 58," it survived the devastating Liberty Fire of 1958. Vintage and present-day equipment were also on display for guests to see the evolution of apparatus development over the past half century. Many historical moments of that era were captured in photographs

and creatively displayed to give guests a peek at the "golden days" of training. To salute the Center's 50 years of service training generations of County firefighters, three water-dropping helicopters flew overhead, awing guests with their powerful presence.

Named after the late Fire Chief Cecil





Royal Gehr, the five-story training facility, located at the top of the headquarters complex on Eastern Avenue, it is the first of four training facilities where County firefighters receive all of the necessary tools and training to prepare them to respond effectively during emergency situations.

The establishment of the Training Center was in response to the rapid expansion of Los Angeles County during the early to mid-1950s. On August 19, 1954, construction began on the \$200,000 training facility; in less than 15 months, the facility was operational. The Center was officially dedicated in Chief Gehr's memory on November 14, 1955, as his widow joined Fire Chief Keith Klinger and County Supervisor John Anson Ford at the ceremony. Prior to 1955, recruit training was conducted in the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County at old Fire Station 17, now part of the City of Santa Fe Springs.

The Training Center provides four training engines, a forcible entry training unit; a flammable liquid and gas training trailer; ladders; and other firefighting tools and equipment. Basic training consists of hose lays, ladders, breathing apparatus and ropes; advance training covers ventilation, forcible entry, salvage, wildland and other topics. In addition to the training engines offered at the facility, the Paul Donohue Fitness Center located just off of the main grinder area provides a fully-equipped gymnasium for employees to keep physically fit.

Over the years, training methodologies, equipment and the center itself have all evolved to keep pace with changing technologies and the expanding scope of fire protection and

life safety services. Back in 1955, when the Department employed 950 uniform personnel, training took place on a two-platoon, 24-hour basis and lasted four to six weeks. Firefighters would train during the day and were expected to be ready to combat fires during the night.

Says Training Captain Robert Contreras, "Recruit training is now more sophisticated, more high tech. Today, recruits endure 55-hours per week of training at the Fire

Academy for a period of 16 weeks and must pass one year of probation in order to become a permanent firefighter."

Areas of training have greatly expanded to include hazardous materials, terrorism, urban search and rescue, swiftwater rescue and air operations,

just to name a few. Beyond their initial intensive Academy training, today's uniform ranks of over 3,000 continuously train in order to maintain a high level of readiness in a growing number of emergency operations offered by LACoFD to local communities and around the globe.



# NEW PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMAND VEHICLE

The Los Angeles County Fire Department has placed a new Public Information command vehicle into service to improve its ability to provide up to the minute information to news reporters and residents.

This 2004 Chevrolet Suburban is well equipped with command equipment, television monitors, satellite television capability and satellite internet. Following the devastating wildfires of 2003, General Motors and the DIRECT TV Group (formerly Hughes Electronics) generously donated the vehicle and equipment. The Public Information Unit is now able to provide much more timely incident information from any location within the Department's jurisdiction.



"This technology will allow information officers to monitor emergency incidents more closely and give the Department the means to provide real time incident information to the public," said Chief Deputy of Operations Gilbert Herrera.



The vehicle's satellite television and satellite internet can now provide information while on scene at any incident. With the use of satellite television,

information officers may review local and national television incident coverage, including live helicopter shots, from a monitoring station mounted in the rear of the vehicle.

The vehicle is also equipped with satellite internet capability, allowing instant access through a wireless internet connection with up to a 200-foot perimeter.

"We are now able to immediately provide residents and the media with maps, evacuation information and other critical information electronically during any incident," said Captain Savage, of the Public Information Section. This year, the Department plans to take it a step further by incorporating the ability to print out maps and directions from the Department's website in order to further assist the public with evacuations during a possible fire, earthquake, tsunami, or flood.

"It's important to constantly improve the communication of major incident information, especially to help the public find shelter locations and verify road closures in a timely and accurate way," said Captain Savage. "This technology will assist us in getting this information to the media."





## From the Editor

*On the Line* is back! For those of you who wondered what happened to *On the Line* and actually picked up the phone to call me about it, thank you. Our organization is so large that I wondered whether anyone would miss it! At the end of 2004, I was given the assignment of serving as the project editor for the Department's 80th Anniversary Yearbook. For me, the project became the "Yearbook Incident," sweeping over my world like a paper tsunami. For the past year, *On the Line* went on hiatus. Slowly last fall, I began gathering material as the yearbook tsunami receded enough for me to get my feet back on dry land, where all of my regular duties were patiently waiting for me.

To help dust it off and usher it back into circulation, Fire Department Multimedia Specialist Chris Thomas created a new look and feel for *On the Line*, including a bold new cover masthead and magazine style format inside. For those of us in the communications biz, it feels like a shiny new rig pulling into the station. The old one was still roadworthy but new is always better.

And since we have not published an issue in a while, there is a variety of material in this issue, including a look back at some of the highlights of 2005 in terms of news, incidents, celebrations, kudos and, most importantly, paying tribute to our late coworkers, Crystal Jefferson and Rick Mallyon. We have also added an "HR Corner" column to help you learn more about Human Resources and your employee benefits in particular. We have also decided to publish this newsletter quarterly from now on in order to have time to publish other more frequent, electronic-based communications coming to you soon.

Do you have a story idea for *On the Line*? When I first started this newsletter in 1998, I set out to recruit volunteer "correspondents" to help funnel news my way from throughout the organization. Now, with our new Fire Department website and upcoming intranet redesign, we are once again looking for employees who are interested in providing information to us for this newsletter and our two websites. It does not need to be a huge time commitment – just let us know what is happening that would be of interest to fellow employees and our customers. Although some divisions have already identified someone, we are always looking for more help. If you would like to help keep everyone informed about the good work that your division is doing, please give me a call at (323) 881-6109, or e-mail me at [khajjar@lacoofd.org](mailto:khajjar@lacoofd.org).

As always, communication is at the heart of our success. Help us tell your story.

**Kristina Hajjar**  
Editor



## LACoFD LAUNCHES NEW WEBSITE

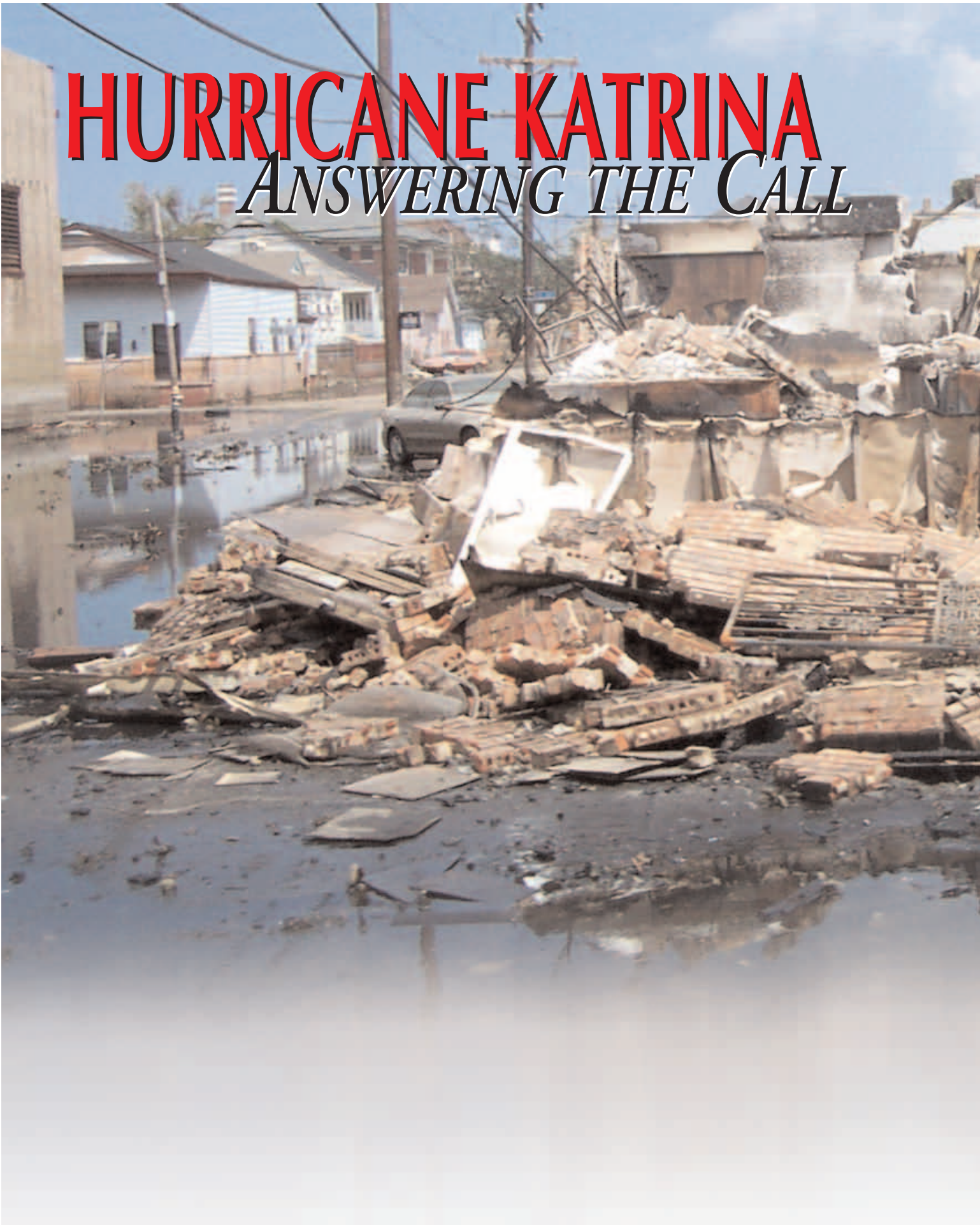
To improve our ability to provide timely information to the public, our Department has launched a new website at [www.lacoofd.org](http://www.lacoofd.org). Completely redesigned, the site provides easy to find, useful information about our Department's services, programs and members who carry out our daily mission. Updated and expanded contact information for each facility and customer service area within our organization is just one example of how we have enhanced its capability as a business tool. Our top news stories and major seasonal, fire prevention and life safety campaigns will be the focus of the home page each week.

This launch represents the first of several website phases to help our organization utilize internet-based technology in reaching out to our many communities across Los Angeles County. Increasing the site's interactivity and providing the public with an electronic way of conducting business with our Department, such as ordering fire reports online and paying annual fees, are planned for the next phase. As envisioned by the project team, the site also has the potential to become a focal point during major incidents and disasters by providing the public and the media with incident facts, evacuation routes, local shelters and other pertinent information.

The site was developed over the past year as a joint project of our Public Affairs Section and Information Management Division, under the direction of Battalion Chief Jim Gandee, Information Management Division Chief Rob Sawyer and Project Managers Vinnie Chin and Chris Thomas.

# HURRICANE KATRINA

## *ANSWERING THE CALL*







*On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the coastal areas of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama with a fury. The storm, ranked as the third most intense hurricane ever to reach landfall in this country, caused several sections of the levee system in the city of New Orleans to collapse. The waters of Lake Pontchartrain rushed in and flooded most of the city. Hundreds drowned. The images of the death and devastation that followed shocked the entire world.*



## SWIFTWATER RESCUE TEAM

One day after Hurricane Katrina lashed the Gulf Coast, the Los Angeles County Fire Department received a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) request to send its 14-member Swiftwater Rescue Team to the disaster area. The team, with Battalion Chiefs Scott Smith and Tom Ewald as task force leaders, was quickly mobilized. Within hours, the team and their complement of vehicles and equipment were on board a C-5 military aircraft and headed to Lafayette, Louisiana.

“As part of the 28-team contingent across the nation, we are ready to go anywhere in the nation and now, with our relationship with the State Department through the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance, we can go international as well,” said Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman. “So, when the call came as a result of Hurricane Katrina, we were ready to go.”

They literally hit the ground running, as vehicles and equipment were quickly unloaded from the aircraft and the team drove into New Orleans to begin performing water rescues. On their first day, they saved more than 500 residents. Self-sufficient for 72 hours, they worked during the critical first three days without worrying about logistics. Adapting to the high humidity posed a challenge to the team.

“We had to stay on top of hydration issues,” noted Smith. “The very large area of operations also posed its own set of problems, as many roads were impassable and just getting around was a challenge.” The team was ready to overcome all obstacles.



**Swiftwater crewmembers transport victims out of their flooded neighborhood in New Orleans.**

“We are used to working in very lean conditions,” added Smith. “This is what we are trained to do. This is what we look forward to doing.”

What wasn't a problem was security. According to Smith, although FEMA stopped operations for one day because of safety concerns, they never felt threatened or in danger at any time during their deployment.

The swiftwater rescue team returned to the County on September 16. Their original one-week deployment had become two, as they pushed to find survivors and the deceased in areas submerged in up to 10 feet of sewage-contaminated water. Spirits remained high even in these difficult conditions. In a press conference held at the Los Angeles International Airport upon their return, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Chair Gloria Molina thanked the rescue team for saving hundreds of lives.

## URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM

A much larger group, the Department's Urban Search and Rescue Team known as “California Task Force 2 (CA-TF2),” left for Camp Shelby, Mississippi, two days after Hurricane Katrina inflicted its damage. Led by Battalion Chiefs John Tripp and Jim Powers, this 75-member team roster included structural engineers, medical doctors, hazardous materials



**Battalion Chief Tom Ewald, center, one of two Swiftwater Rescue Team task force leaders, commented on the devastation of Hurricane Katrina at a press conference held at LAX on September 16.**



# HURRICANE KATRINA

## *Answering the Call*

technicians, K-9 search specialists and other highly trained firefighters. Their primary mission was to search for and rescue survivors in the flooded areas of New Orleans.

The team traveled to the disaster area in a convoy of 17 vehicles, carrying 60,000 pounds of prepackaged tools and medical equipment. They staged for several days in Dallas, Texas, where they developed operational plans. They also readied their K-9 teams, tested their Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) equipment, and cross-trained with fellow California firefighters from Orange County, Riverside County and the City of Los Angeles.

and secondary search and rescue operations on both dry land and flooded areas, covering thousands of residential and business structures.

"The team faced very arduous tasks under somewhat unbearable conditions for an extended amount of time," said Tripp. "It was challenging to adapt our tactics and tasks to an environment we had no experience in," noting the sheer volume of grinding work faced by the team. "It was hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel," he said.

In spite of difficulties, the team rescued six residents and located

New Orleans fire stations for reoccupation.

"Our firefighters were chomping at the bit to help fellow firefighters," said Powers. They cleaned stations during what should have been their rest period. When Orange County firefighters learned about this special mission, they also joined in.

One New Orleans fire captain stopped by and broke into tears when he saw firefighters from other agencies hard at work cleaning his station. Local residents were just as appreciative and struck up conversations and thanking them for coming so far to help them.

The team returned to the County on September 20, gleeful to see their families after three weeks away. According to Freeman, it was a new record for the number of days for a task force to be deployed.

### **LOS ANGELES COUNTY ADVANCE TEAM**

On September 8, Los Angeles County sent an Advance Team to New Orleans to help the City of New Orleans and the Parish of New Orleans (which share a

common governmental sovereignty) establish and maintain continuity of government operations. To do this, they identified areas of expertise and support needed from the County. Headed by Deputy Chief Daryl Osby,



***Team members waited as Fire Department vehicles and equipment roll out of the Air National Guard aircraft moments after landing in Louisiana.***

The team was finally deployed to New Orleans on September 8. Within hours of their arrival, they rescued an 87-year-old woman stranded by the floodwaters. Throughout their 21-day deployment, they conducted primary

numerous bodies for later recovery. In searching thousands of structures, they removed any doubt that somebody may still be trapped in those buildings. During their last few days, they decontaminated and cleaned up three

the Advance Team included a retired city manager and personnel from Fire, Sheriff, Public Works, Public Health and the Office of Emergency Management. The Fire Department coordinated all logistics.

"We were greeted by a horrific scene of devastation. There were houses on top of houses and water up to the rooftop for miles," said Deputy Chief Mark Cooper, serving as deputy incident commander. "There was no electricity or running water. We felt like we were in a third world country."

The lack of coordination in all levels of government was apparent. Cooperation among local, state, and federal officials was tense, noted Osby.

"In many instances, they were not cooperating in a collaborative spirit," he said. Despite this, they persevered in identifying the city's critical needs and provided recommendations on how to set up and operate an emergency operations center and also how to reestablish public health. They developed speaking points for the mayor regarding public health and environmental issues.

After working for three days in New Orleans, the team was reassigned to the State of Louisiana to help coordinate the body recovery effort. They provided planning, organizational, and logistical support, as well as operational recommendations, to Kenyon International, a private contractor tasked with recovering the bodies.

Fire Department personnel served



***A group of children seem to be enjoying themselves as they are escorted by Swiftwater responders.***

Others served as members of FEMA's Incident Support Teams and the U.S. Agency for International Development/Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance International Support Team which coordinates donations

with the advance team for three weeks before they were relieved by a new group headed by Deputy Chief Jesus Burciaga. During their deployment, they were severely tested. They struggled to find fuel, food, water, sanitation and sleeping accommodations. They even had to weather Hurricane Rita, which struck Louisiana during their deployment.

"The concept of sending an advance team was a very sound approach to go into an area that has been devastated like New Orleans and to really make a full-scale assessment of what was needed to maintain continuity of government," added Freeman.

## **OTHER EFFORTS**

Department personnel also served in supporting capacities. The Pacoima Support Section worked tirelessly behind the scenes to facilitate the operations of teams in the field.



***Battalion Chief Tom Ewald, left, spent a few moments with U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff during the team's two-week deployment.***

from other countries.

On September 2, the Fire Department sounded the call for volunteers who would like to help in the impacted areas either by working in American Red Cross shelters or by doing community relations work for FEMA. Several days later, the call was expanded to include volunteers who have needed specialty skills like plumbers, public information representatives, electricians, telecommunications experts, heavy duty truck drivers, and dozer operators. By the last count, 155 Fire Department employees answered the call. They



# HURRICANE KATRINA

## *Answering the Call*

stood ready as they awaited their deployment orders.

On September 21, the Department deployed its Critical Incident Stress Management team to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, for one week. The team of two mental health professionals and five peer support members provided support to emergency response personnel and their families in the surrounding areas including basic needs, such as food and water, financial assistance, medical needs and counseling.

Everyone deployed expressed a feeling of pride – in their team mates, in the work they did and in their organization.

“I felt that all of the teams involved had a huge impact in New Orleans’ emergency. I believe that the citizens and

businesses of the city benefited from our presence,” said Osby.

“There is no question in my mind that our personnel made a significant difference in the lives of thousands of people down there. It was well worth the effort and makes us all very proud,” said Freeman.

The devastation of Hurricane Katrina triggered a national response from firefighters, law enforcement officers, military personnel and civilians to help alleviate the plight of the hurricane’s victims. The Los Angeles County Fire Department was a proud participant and will continue to help for as long as help is needed.



## **FIRE CHIEF SALUTES PROJECT PLAYHOUSE CREW AT FIRE STATION 126**

County firefighters from Fire Station 126 in Valencia were recently treated to lunch by Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman and presented with certificates of appreciation for volunteering to custom build a playhouse for charity. The

Victorian-style firehouse (inset), complete with two operable bell towers, brass fire pole, tiny turnouts and helmets, was auctioned at the House of Blues for \$21,000, to benefit HomeAid, a charity program that provides temporary shelter for L.A. and Ventura County homeless residents. ABOVE LEFT:

Crewmembers viewed their masterpiece on display at the Valencia Town Center. ABOVE RIGHT: After lunch and presentations from the Chief and charity organizers Kathleen and Charlie Gil, the crew stepped out back for a photo. Fire Fighter Specialist Steve Lawrence, Battalion Chief Gary Burden, Fire Fighter Rich Adams, Assistant Chief Matt Gil, Captain Tom Robertson, Charlie and Kathleen Gil, Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman, Acting Deputy Chief Steve Lindsey, Fire Fighter Louie Cervantes, Fire Fighter Specialist Kevin Kinney, Fire Fighter Brian Fleming, Fire Fighter Scott Tucker and Captain Marshall Oldham.



# From the Family of Fire Fighter Crystal Golden-Jefferson

10/26/05

To the Los Angeles County Fire Department:

Dear Fire Department Family,

Words can not express our gratitude for your exceptional kindness to our family during our crisis. From the time Crystal was diagnosed, all through her treatment to the funeral and beyond, your support and involvement was beyond the call of duty and friendship. Our family will never forget you.

Special thanks to the men and women who worked long hours for Crystal.

Special thanks to the former Inglewood Fire Department, Compton Fire Department, The Inglewood Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriffs Department, The Los Angeles City Fire Department, The Stentorians, The International Brotherhood of Firefighters, The Black Female Association of Firefighters and Local Union 1014.

And special thanks to Chaplain Elvin Miranda for holding our hands every step of the way! And our extended family Station 58, Captain Brian Jordan who went through Explorer scout training with Crystal, trained by Tommy Orso...And her buddies and ours, Reggie, Guy, Bernard, Roosevelt, Frank, Ricky. And of course, Retired Battalion Chief Hershel Clady.

Keep doing the fabulous job you all are doing, and please stay healthy, take time for yourself and family, friends, and above all, enjoy life and have some fun. Our daughter enjoyed all her family and friends, and above all FUN was her middle name.

Thanks for your caring and sharing.

The family of Crystal Golden-Jefferson  
Zalika Jefferson, Dolores and Jim Golden, Tome and Lashanta Golden, Emma and Thadeus Milligan





# In memory of Nurse Educator Rick Mallyon

July 22, 1955 to October 3, 2005

Los Angeles County Fire Department mourns the loss of a great man, Nurse Educator Rick Mallyon. Rick died peacefully on October 3, 2005, surrounded by family and friends. His long battle with cancer finally came to an end. Rick was one of the most amazing, brilliant, kind, funny, well-read, caring men I have ever known. I was privileged to know Rick not only as an educator, but also as a friend. Rick touched my life. He taught me about living and he taught me about dying.

Rick was an educator and ally to his firefighters in Battalions 11 and 17. He was a loving husband and father. He was a nurse, a friend, a philosopher, a coach, a mentor, and a scholar. He leaves behind his wife, Julia, daughter Ashley, and son Joseph.

Rick joined the Department as a nurse educator in 2001, after working as an emergency department nurse and pre-hospital care co-coordinator at Antelope Valley Hospital. Rick received his bachelor's degree in theology from Pacific Christian College in 1977, and went on to graduate school in Tennessee.

Rick grew up in Lancaster, California. He loved the stark beauty, heat, stars and cool winds of the desert. His earliest memories were of friendships, the smell of alfalfa fields, playing baseball, riding his bike, and family activities with his mom, dad and sisters. From very early on, Rick showed a precocious wit and a love of fun and playing pranks.

After several crazy teenage years, Rick and his friends were "deposited" at Central Christian Church in Lancaster, where Rick became a devoted and passionate Christian. When Rick came out of graduate school in theology, he was a guitar-playing, red-bearded youth minister. As years went by, Rick's heart and mind changed directions, and he became an avid student of philosophy, history and Eastern religions.

Twenty one years ago, Rick's life took another change in direction. He met his beautiful wife, Julia, a neonatal intensive care nurse at Antelope Valley Hospital, and they enjoyed 17 years together as husband and wife. It is not surprising that their daughter, Ashley, is heading toward a career in nursing.

Rick lived the answer to the question: "What would you do if you had only 6 months to live?" Rick's answer was to spend his time, resources and energy with his wife,



**Rick, seated at center, enjoyed spending time with colleagues Linda Brumfield, left, and Vicki MacDonald, right.**

children, friends and the firefighters he cared so much about. Rick loved conversation, laughter and humor, smoking good cigars, and always, *always*, curiosity and learning. The



**Nurse Educator Rick Mallyon**

day before he died, Rick talked and laughed and read about how the Egyptian pyramids were constructed.

Rick believed that our ultimate finite resource is time. Rick believed that one does not grow or gain insight without pain. He spoke of the ancient Roman philosopher Seneca's concept that people value things and money and do not put a high value on time until they are confronted with their own mortality. These are some of the thoughts that Rick shared with me during his last days. I was struck by Rick's positive attitude, his ability to see the whole picture and not get lost in the parts, his willingness to listen and share his insights and compassion with anyone who sought out time to converse with him.

Thank you to the firefighters of Battalions 11 and 17 for their love, care, and for always being there for Rick and his family. Thank you for working so hard in the summer heat laying down the stone patio, and for assembling the fountain that sang its water song for Rick during his last days. Special thanks to Chaplain Scott Zbinden for his help and his heart. Rick, we will miss you and keep you in our hearts. You taught us how to "Know The Self."

— Vicki MacDonald, RN, LACoFD  
Nurse Educator

# The Next Generation Fire Shelter

In 2004, the Los Angeles County Fire Department upgraded its fire shelters used by firefighters to the New Generation Fire Shelter. This important wildland firefighting tool, designed by the Missoula Technology Development Center and manufactured by the Weckworth-Langdon Company, is equipped with better protection against convective heat.

Despite a slight increase in weight and size than its predecessors, this shelter provides a greater chance of survival if or when a firefighter is mandated to deploy.

The Department's Executive Team was first presented with this new piece of equipment in 2004, when Battalion Chief Kenneth Douglas and Captain Scott Polgar provided the benefits and suggested three upgrade plans to replace existing shelters. The first plan included the provision of the new generation shelter to all Fire Camp personnel, keeping the station personnel with the existing shelter. The second plan was to replace all pre-1990 manufactured shelters, eventually replacing all shelters. The third plan was to change out all shelters at one time. The Executive Team decided to



The combined aluminum with the woven silica, allows for a slow heat passage to the inside of the shelter.

The inner layer, made of aluminum foil, is laminated to fiber glass to prevent heat passage from re-radiating to the firefighter inside. With both layers sown together, the shelter is able to create an air gap to provide further insulation.

not only go with the final plan of replace all fire shelters but, in addition, approved the purchase of extra shelters to be stored at the Department's Warehouse Facility in Pacoima for future utilization, with a cost totaling over one million dollars.

The New Generation Fire Shelter can be identified by a blue outer case versus the old shelter's yellow outer cover. This shelter is made up of two different layers. An outer layer, made of aluminum foil, is laminated to woven silica. With the aluminum outer material, this shelter can reflect 95 percent of radiant heat. In addition to the added protection against radiant heat, the shelter provides 81 percent more protection during direct flame contact compared to the old shelter.

The Los Angeles County Fire Department was the first fire department in the United States that completely updated to the new shelter in line with a new federal mandate. In 2007, the government will require all fire departments to change to the new shelter. Fire shelters have been used in wildland firefighting since the 1960s and have been a mandatory piece of equipment for the Department since 1977. The fire shelter has been credited for saving over 300 lives and preventing serious burn injuries. Although the old and new shelters still do not provide 100 percent protection against direct flame contact, this piece of equipment is still considered extremely important – especially when a firefighter's life is in on the line.

## R E T I R E E S

### October Retirees:

*Shirreffs, III, William G. – Fire Fighter Specialist*  
*Greear, Kathleen – Procurement Assistant II*

### November Retirees:

*Perkins, Stanley – Fire Captain*  
*Wilson, Mark – Fire Captain*  
*Gahie, III, Mitchell J. – Chief Helicopter Maintenance*  
*Hartman, Clifford – Power Equipment Mechanic*  
*Lenhart, Alan G. – Fire Fighter*  
*Samuel, Jerome – Fire Prevention Engineering Assistant II*  
*Rumfol, Jack – Battalion Chief*

### December Retirees:

*McLain, Bruce – Fire Fighter Specialist*  
*Parker Dale – Fire Captain*

### January Retirees:

*Fleming, Jane – Staff Assistant III*  
*Johnson, Fredrick C. – Senior Fire Equipment Mechanic*  
*King, Dennis D. – Fire Fighter Specialist*  
*Morgan, Fred O. – Battalion Chief*  
*Nishikawa, Jun – Fire Fighter*  
*O'Connell, Steven L. – Fire Captain*

*Spencer, Victor A. – Fire Fighter Specialist*  
*Story, David – Section Chief, Lifeguards*  
*Taylor, Alan C. – Fire Fighter*  
*Telfer, Gary R. – Senior Ocean Lifeguard*  
*Turek, Jack M. – Fire Captain*  
*Wayt, Gary – Fire Captain*  
*Williams, Albert C. – Fire Fighter*





**NEW RANK:** In 2000, Banh was promoted to Accountant II and received his new identification card from Fire Chief P. Michael Freeman at a promotional ceremony.

## Counting on Luck: Trieu Banh's Story of Survival

Did you know that Fire Department Accountant II Trieu Banh was in the Vietnam War for eight years, serving as a signal man and assistant to a captain in the South Vietnamese Navy? His job was to command soldiers to fire on attacking ships. Now, sitting in his quiet Financial Management Division office in Commerce more than three decades later, his recollections still bring an emotional response.

"The worst part was at night on our ship on the Mekong River, when the North Vietnamese would hide in the jungles alongside the river. They would send groups of men

into the river to try and ambush us. Every half-hour or hour we would have to drop a grenade into the river to keep them from attacking us," he explained. One time that really scared me is we docked our boat at a port in Cambodia while waiting to transport refugees back to South Vietnam. We noticed a stranger acting very peculiar. He jumped into the water and swam underneath the ship. It did not look like he had any weapons but we arrested him. I am just very happy that I am not in the navy anymore and that is all over with."

*continued on page 20*

## Survivor Handbook to be Published

In the early 1980s, Candy Wilson, widow of LACoFD Fire Fighter John Wilson, founded the Los Angeles County Fire Department Family Support Group. The purpose of the family group was, and continues to be, to provide emotional support and guidance for women who have lost firefighter husbands. The group organizes events, meetings and outings to help each other cope through the grieving process. Collectively, they have made one another stronger individuals. Over the course of the years, they have found different ways to organize and disseminate information to help each other handle many of the financial aspects of their benefits.

Through many months of hard work, the group put together the LaCoFD Family Support Group Survivor Handbook. The handbook is a comprehensive reference guide containing an abundance of information that will answer many of the questions relating to the aftermath of the loss for the survivors, including finances, coping with grief and planning for the future. Ingrid Weiss-Salveson currently serves as coordinator, assisted by eight other members of the group. The Handbook will be published in early 2006 and distributed to each fire station so that all members of the Department may help their families be better prepared.



**At last summer's meeting of the Los Angeles County Fire Department Family Support Group at Camp 2, Fire Chief P. Michael and members of the Executive Team took a moment to pose for an updated group photo. Back row, l-r: Administrative Bureau Deputy Chief Mark Cooper, Susan Rounds, Donna Russell, Adrene Williams and Chief Deputy Gary Lockhart. Front row, l-r: Bobbi Age, Jeanie Carter, Chief Freeman, Ingrid Weiss-Salveson, Nancy Howe and Joann Davis. Not pictured: Chris Moiseve.**

# Trieu Banh's Story

*continued from previous page*

As part of the South Vietnamese Navy, Banh trained at the U.S. Naval Fleet Training Center in San Diego in 1968. He also attended the Defense Language Institute to learn English at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, and returned to San Diego for Quartermaster training. While heading back to South Vietnam, Banh encountered a Korean vessel. He signaled to the ship just as he had been taught during fleet training.

"I got on top of the roof and used a light to send an SOS message because the small craft that we were on was beginning to take in water. Luckily, the Korean vessel responded back and we all boarded onto the ship. I was so relieved," recalled Banh.

During the war, the morale of South Vietnam's troops was kept high with the aid of American soldiers.

"When the Americans were there fighting with us, our men felt like they could defeat North Vietnam. The morale was strong," he said. "Once the Americans withdrew completely in 1973, our crew just gave up. It was devastating to see this because we had fought for five long years and did not want to lose. I feared for my life after the war because North Vietnam knew I had fought for the Americans, but I was still eager to get back to my family."

When Banh arrived in the United States in 1975 after the war, he



**THE BANH FAMILY:** *Front row l-r: Hoa and Trieu are the lucky parents of six children, three of whom were born in America. Back row l-r: Alan, Lan, Cindy, Jenny, Lisa and John.*

requested political asylum from the U.S. government. He was finally free but his heart was broken because he never had a chance to say farewell to his wife and children. For the next five years, he wrote to his wife under an alias so that the Vietnamese government would not punish her for his actions. Banh ended up in a refugee camp in Arkansas and received a scholarship to attend Adams State College in Colorado. Later, a friend in Utah convinced him to enroll at Weber State College in Utah, where the community welcomed and encouraged him to complete his education.

Banh supported himself by working as a building custodian on campus and received some student financial aid. He graduated in 1980 with a degree in accounting and was hired by the Job Corps as a math instructor. Several months later, he was given "the present of his life" when he was finally able to bring his wife, two sons, and daughter to the United States through the Orderly Departure Program.

The Program began when conditions in the southern portion of the newly reunified Vietnam worsened in the late 1970s and resulted in thousands of Vietnamese people trying to escape in overcrowded boats – as many as half of them perished at sea. The United Nations negotiated an agreement with Vietnam to allow

for the "orderly departure" for some of its citizens with relatives abroad. Banh's family was among the first group to be released by this program.

"I was so happy when I saw my family again for the first time in five long years. Words cannot even describe it. To finally be able to see them was the one of the happiest moments of my life. I still get very sad about what happened, though. I get goosebumps just talking about it."

Banh continued to work for the Job Corps and later relocated to California, landing an accounting position with the Los Angeles County Fire Department. He was eventually able to bring his parents and siblings to America.

"The price that we had to pay was worth it. Here, we have freedom. There, you live day by day. Now, we sleep peacefully at night," he added with a smile.